

IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
July 24, 2002

Contact: Micah Swafford  
202-225-2132

## **OK's Role in Homeland Security Increases**

*Washington, DC* -- Oklahoma's role in homeland security will expand thanks to legislation passed by the U.S. House today, said Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK). Istook authored the bill, as the chairman of the appropriations subcommittee that oversees funding for the Office of Homeland Security, the Customs Service, and much of federal law enforcement.

Istook's bill was approved 308 to 121. Several programs in Oklahoma are boosted, including increased help for the Customs National Aviation Center (CNAC) in Oklahoma City, the Federal Aviation Agency training facility in OKC, a sensor technology initiative at Oklahoma State University, and the Oklahoma City National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism.

Customs' aviation center in Oklahoma City will receive an additional \$10-million beyond its previous funding, to expand its tactical training for all customs pilots. That's on top of an earlier \$10-million increase Istook secured last year.

**"The U.S. Customs Service has to keep our borders secure, and we're increasing its aerial surveillance,"** said Istook. **"Since we're in the middle of the country, it makes sense to consolidate aviation training here, where flight crews can come in from all directions. I'm making sure the government makes full use of the Customs' aviation center here, as well as of the FAA Aeronautical Center."**

The bill encourages federal law enforcement to make maximum use of existing federal training facilities such as the FAA center for rapidly-expanding training needs like airport security and baggage screening.

Lindy Ritz, director of the FAA Aeronautical Center said, **"The Aeronautical Center has been honored to be a host training facility for over 300 new TSA [Transportation Security Administration] and contract employees each week since the formation of the new Administration and expects this number to continue through the fiscal year. Congressmen Istook was instrumental in highlighting our capabilities to TSA, and we would welcome the opportunity to provide on going training support for this critical mission."**

In addition, the bill urges the Office of Homeland Security to coordinate with the Oklahoma City National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, specifically so first responders to emergencies can share and learn from each other's experiences. The bill also urges the Customs Service to pursue testing and acquiring new sensing and reaction technologies being developed by Oklahoma State University's Bio-Terrorism Defense and Advanced Sensor Research initiative.

**"Oklahoma has a lot to offer in America's fight against terrorism,"** said Istook. **"I'm pleased to help both Oklahoma and our country by making sure that we take full advantage of Oklahoma's resources."**